

The Ballarat Naturalist

Volume 22 No.3

April 2022



Lake Wendouree Boat Trip Saturday 19 March 2022

On a pleasant evening nearly 30 people including two RatNats (Juniors) gathered at the Boat Shed to board the Begonia City Paddle Steamer. Earlier in the day there was a strong northerly wind but by evening there was just a gentle breeze.

From the boat we were able to see into the islands created in the reed bed from the sludge dredged from the rowing course. The mounds, muddy edges and open water provide good habitat for a range of birds. Magpie Geese, Pelican, Masked Lapwing, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal and Golden-headed Cisticola were seen in the area.

Swamp Harrier, Great Egret, and a large flock of Little Corella were seen flying overhead.

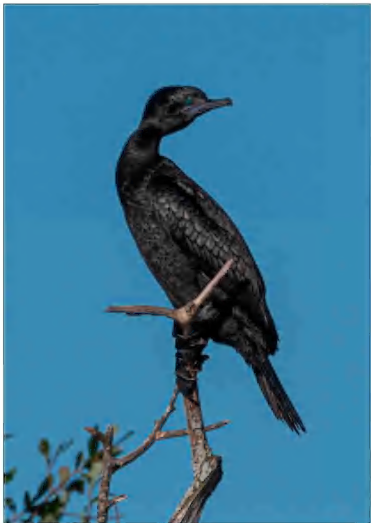
Many thanks to Val Hocking for organising this unique trip.



The evening light was perfect for the boat trip, lighting the subjects with warmth, especially the Swamp Harrier. When I looked at the



Little Pied Cormorants on the big screen I could see that one youngster had its bill down its parent's throat, being fed!



And there were young Little Black Cormorants on their nest. Compare their fluffiness with the sleek adult with its jade-coloured eye.



A fast shutter speed captured the spray from the Musk Duck as it kicked out in a display designed to attract a mate. Side lighting lit the flying ibis well, too.

Carol H.



Birds recorded on Lake Wendouree Boat Trip

Magpie Goose	Musk Duck	Australian Wood Duck
Grey Teal	Chestnut Teal	Pacific Black Duck
Hardhead	Blue-billed Duck	
Australasian Grebe	Hoary-headed Grebe	Great Crested Grebe
Little Pied Cormorant	Little Black Cormorant	Great Egret
Australian Pelican	Australian White Ibis	
Swamp Harrier	Purple Swamphen	Dusky Moorhen
Eurasian Coot	Masked Lapwing	Silver Gull
Long-billed Corella	Little Corella	Magpie-lark
Golden-headed Cisticola	Australian Reed-Warbler	
Welcome Swallow	Common Starling	



Lake Lights Reprieve!

Thanks to the efforts of a few passionate people including our own Judith Bailey, Lake Wendouree now has a Interim Protection Order in place. The order was imposed by the Heritage Council of Victoria to effectively halt works involving new lighting around the lake. Many people have protested to the City of Ballarat regarding the inappropriate nature of the proposed overhead lights.

Congratulations to Judith and the many others who have the interests of wildlife and the natural environment at heart, rather than the needs or wants of a handful of humans. We will continue to follow the situation and report on progress.



Excerpts from 69th Annual General Meeting held Mar 4, 2022

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: President Bill Elder welcomed 21 members and two visitors.

Apologies: received from S. Faull, M. Moravec, A. Grant, C. Menzies & B. Cheesman.

Motion: that the Apologies be accepted.

Moved: L. Hanrahan **Seconded:** A. Arnold **Carried.**

Minutes of the Previous AGM read by Secretary, Emily Noble.

Motion: that the Minutes of the previous Meeting be accepted as a true & accurate record.

Moved: A. Arnold **Seconded:** K. Elder **Carried.**

President's Report:

Bill Elder presented his Annual President's Report.
(see p. 6 for an excerpt)

Motion: That the Annual President's Report be accepted.

Moved: W. Elder **Seconded:** C. Dalman **Carried.**

Treasurer's Report:

Kathy Elder presented the three-part Annual Treasurer's Report.

Motion: That the Annual Treasurer's Report be accepted as a true and correct record.

Moved: K. Elder **Seconded:** N. Netherway **Carried.**

Election of Office Bearers:

Retiring Club President Bill Elder handed over to Peter Dalman to preside over the Election of Office Bearers and general committee members. Peter began by noting that he felt it was a great honour and privilege to oversee the elections and, on behalf of all members, and he passed on his sincere thanks to the Committee for holding the Club together through the many challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. He also acknowledged the herculean efforts of John Petheram and others on environmental, cultural and heritage issues relating to Hepburn Shire's proposed Creswick Trails Project and thanked all members who spent many hours on preparations and plans for the SEANA Spring Camp that our Club was to host in October 2021, but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to covid-related restrictions and logistical impositions.

Peter confirmed that in the absence of any other nominations, and in light of the eligibility of all nominees, the following were duly elected (see p. 5)

Peter also mentioned that members could still contact a committee member if they decided they would like to serve on the committee.

President: Margaret Rich
Vice President: vacant
Secretary: Emily Noble
Treasurer: Kathy Elder
Newsletter Ed.: William Elder (Bill)
Committee: Andrew Arnold
Bernadette Cheesman
Val Hocking
Graeme Lunt
John Petheram

General Business:

Due to the Club’s financially stable position, the Committee recommended that 2022-23 membership fees stay at 2021-22 levels.

Membership fees are currently:

Ordinary Member (Adult)	\$35
Family	\$55
Distant Member	\$20
Student Member	\$15
Newsletter Postage	\$12

Motion: That the 2022-23 membership fees stay at 2021-22 levels as above.
Moved: J. Petheram **Seconded:** C. Hall **Carried.**

Meeting closed at 8.14pm.



“Not-So-Creepy Crawlies” was the theme for March’s club meeting. John Petheram showed this well camouflaged Jackie Dragon (*Amphibolurus muricatus*) 25 cm long - on path to Mt Abrupt, Southern Grampians. More on p.13

Excerpts from President's Report for 2022 AGM

Another 12 months rolls by and we find ourselves still in the grip of the pandemic, despite having made so many adjustments. Our prime concern has been to keep people safe which has often meant cancelling meetings or excursions or limiting numbers for planned events. It has been a year of regrets where we had so many grand plans only to see them dashed by COVID, including the Spring SEANA camp. Despite the patchy uncertainty of the ongoing health crisis, we did manage to lay down some excellent memories. The Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture was a highlight of 2021 with a large number of people attending via Zoom. Emily Noble shone a light on the life and work of Gordon Clarke and by extension, the success of Clarksdale not only as a Bird Sanctuary, but also as an exemplar of bushland and grasslands management.

Earlier in the year, excursion guru, John Gregurke took us on a visit to Limeburners Bay and the Geelong Botanic Gardens, both of which were fascinating sites for history, birds, plants and landscapes. We took part in International Dark Sky Week at Ballarat Municipal Observatory.

Members images were a popular component of meetings on Zoom and we made the most of rare field trips. We greatly enjoyed Powerful Owls at Clarksdale and Sacred kingfishers at Lake Wendouree. Sparrow Ground and Woowookarung closer to town were visited by a keen group in October and plenty of wildflowers made the trip worthwhile.

Guest speakers from outside the club included Neil Anderton from Friends of Inverleigh Nature Conservation Reserve, John Lenegan from ANGAI and Yasmin Kelsall who presented on the Habitat Hectare method of native vegetation assessment.

The Junior Rat Nats were able to get out on a few occasions spending one day looking at bark at "Stringybark", some nice fungi also at "Stringybark" and a camp near the Grampians with the Juniors from FNCV (Melbourne) at Easter.

Sadly, this is my last report to the club as president. My health will prevent me from taking on such a role with the club at any time in the future. I will stay on the committee for the next 12 months. Having been diagnosed with a terminal cancer back in July last year, I was asked about some of the things that were important in my life. It is not surprising that my first response was family, closely followed by nature and being in nature. In many ways, field nats fulfils both these life priorities and I can honestly say that my field nats family will continue to be a major part of my life.

Bill Elder

March Field Excursion - Sunday 6 March

A visit to three wetlands

This was a wetlands excursion to view dragonflies and damselflies. According to Theischinger and Hawking's book, *The Complete Guide to Dragonflies of Australia*, the order Odonata, in Australia, contains two suborders: the damselflies (Zygoptera) and the dragonflies proper (Epiproctophora or Anisoptera). For those who would like some detail about these insects I will continue to paraphrase from the book. Damselflies are generally very slender insects with forewings and hindwings similar in shape and venation (vein arrangement) and commonly held close to the body. Dragonflies on the other hand are described as stouter, strong-flying insects with forewings and hind wings dissimilar in shape and venation, commonly held spread out when at rest. Generally, the damselflies do their hunting and feeding while perched on vegetation, whereas dragonflies catch their prey while on the wing.



The first stop for our fourteen attendees was Mullawallah Wetland with its endangered Aquatic Herbland/Plains Sedgy Wetland Mosaic vegetation. The area contains many endangered species of birds and frogs. Even though we set off at a later time of 10am, there were few insects out and about in the cloudy, misty weather.

Field trip leader Emily explained the first thing to notice about damselflies and dragonflies is that their activity levels are highly temperature dependent, with very low levels in cool weather (i.e. less than 18°C).

The first two dragonflies we saw were dead specimens of the Blue-spotted Hawker. It was thus easy to examine details such as the end of the female's abdomen with its two spikes for digging into reeds to bury eggs.

The instars of a Leaf Hopper (Jassidae) were seen with ants busy feeding on the honey pots associated with them.

Birds sighted were Dusky Moorhen Superb Fairy-wren flying above the water, Australian White Ibis, Musk Duck, Crested Grebe, Tree Martin, Magpie-lark, Welcome Swallow, Starling, Eurasian Coot, Yellow-faced Honeyeater and the seed-eating European Goldfinch.

Among the plants seen were a Lightwood full of blossom, seeds and galls, Woolly Tea-tree, very tall Cumbungi, Native Geranium, blue-flowered Prick-foot *Eryngium vesiculosum* (below) in the same

Genus as Blue Devil, Senecio, Pennywort, Poison

Our second site was the Haddon Common Bushland Reserve along Taylors Road after a brief pitstop at Haddon Recreation Reserve. The dam there was constructed as the original water supply for Haddon.



Here there were a few more insects flying about: *Rutilia*, a large, iridescent Tachinid Fly, an unidentified inch-long, white moth on the tip of several reeds in the water, smaller White Reed Moths *Tipanaea patulella* on reeds at the dam's edge (left). and Emperor Gum Moth cocoons.



A particular highlight was a large cluster of roosting native bees on the gum-nuts of a Scent-bark (left). They were later identified on iNaturalist as belonging to sub-genus *Austronomia*.

Striking blue-and-red leaf hopper nymphs on the same tree are yet to be identified (below), and Vireya and Graeme found our first damselfly, an Aurora bluetail *Ischnura aurora*. Among the plants noted were Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea, Small St. John's Wort, Spike Rush and Milfoil.



Here we again saw the Wedge-tailed Eagles we had spotted at Haddon Recreation Reserve, and Australian Wood Ducks. As in many reserves, there were plenty of gorse bushes and blackberries with berries ripe for eating.

Finally, we visited the Parks Victoria-managed Surface Hill Historic Area, off the Ross Creek-Smythesdale Rd. The Argyle Dam found here was constructed in the 1850s. Near the edge of the dam we set up our chairs to have lunch while noting some of the vegetation that included Blackwood, *Allocasuarina littoralis*, Cherry Ballart, plenty of Spike Rush, a flowering, small creeping Goodenia *Goodenia humilis*, Centella with its little leaves on the ground at the edge of the dam, Common Wedge-pea, Cranberry Heath, Black-anther Flax-lily, Small Grass-tree and Myrtle Wattle.

Sheree's keen eyes spotted the wingless female Clouded Footman Moth with eggs on its nest made from its own hairs on a gum leaf (right). We saw Imperial Blue Butterfly pupae on a Black-wood (below) and hairy caterpillars on a sapling Eucalypt. Other species of insects observed have been uploaded to iNaturalist and can be seen on the FNCB iNaturalist project page.



In spite of misty rain we went deeper into the bush and were successful in finding the locally significant Bushy Clubmoss *Lycopodium deuterodensum* (below). We also saw Rock Fern, Common Flat-pea and pink-flowering Native Heath. Emily also showed us where we could find the

rare Emerald-lip Greenhoods *Pterostylis smaragdyna* in winter and Spotted Hyacinth-orchids in summer.

Birds observed here included Grey Fantail, White-throated Treecreeper, Grey Shrike-thrush, Thornbills and Swamphen.

Fran Hanrahan and Emily Noble



Excerpts of Club Meeting March 4th, 2022

Held via Zoom, immediately after the AGM.

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: Newly-elected President Margaret Rich welcomed 21 members and two visitors to the Club Meeting. She then presented her inaugural speech, a copy of which will be sent to members with these Minutes.

Apologies: S. Faull, M. Moravec, A. Grant, C Menzies and B. Cheesman.

Motion: that the Apologies be accepted.

Moved: G. Lunt **Seconded:** F. Hanrahan **Carried.**

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Motion: that the Minutes of the previous Meeting (February 4, 2022) be accepted as a true and accurate record.

Moved: J. Gregurke **Seconded:** L. Hanrahan **Carried.**

Business Arising from Correspondence:

Susan Kruss, Federation University Masters student (History) has been seeking assistance in locating information about the Club's receipt of a Ballarat Environment Network Award in 2002.

Julie Heron has applied for a family membership and Craig Menzies has applied to become an individual member of the FNCB. Everyone was happy to welcome them to the Club.

Motion: That Julie and Craig be accepted into membership of the FNCB.

Moved: A. Arnold **Seconded:** F. Hanrahan **Carried.**

SEANA (South East Australian Naturalists' Association) membership due for renewal (\$20.00/yr).

Motion: That the FNCB renew its membership of SEANA.

Moved: E. Noble **Seconded:** J. Gregurke **Carried.**

The SEANA Committee is looking to fill three positions, with the terms of three current committee members expiring at the SEANA AGM on Saturday 26 March. No-one volunteered to represent our Club on the SEANA Committee.

Treasurer's Report

Opening bal.: \$8,424.27

Income \$90.00

Expenses: \$64.37

Closing bal.: \$8,449.90

Motion: that the Treasurer's Report be accepted and tabled invoices be approved for payment.

Moved: K. Elder **Seconded:** J. Petheram **Carried.**

General Business:

Val invited members to participate in working bees to control gorse at Sparrow Ground on Tuesdays from 10am-12pm, meeting at the rotunda.

Show & Tell/ Field Reports

- Andy was amazed to hear a Ewing's Tree Frog, *Litoria ewingii* calling in Alfredton a few days before the first rain for about seven weeks and wondered if they had some way of sensing upcoming rain before us. He recorded them on the easy-to-use Frog ID app to share the information with researchers and interested community members. When Andy played us the frog call using the app, Val and Nina realised they had heard/seen the same frog, Val in her neighbour's garden in Ballarat East and Nina in her Invermay Park backyard after rain.
- Nina also observed numerous small skinks hunting insects in her backyard.
- Emily reported that the last family of Sacred Kingfishers with three chicks departed Clarksdale for northern climes last week after a storm-impacted nesting in a hollow in a Scentbark, *Eucalyptus aromaphloia*.
- John G found four flowering Austral Ladies Tresses, *Spiranthes australis* at St Georges Lake in Creswick compared to a dozen last year, with the number probably down because of a flood impacting their site earlier in the season. He also found a Brolga in the reeds on the east side of Lake Learmonth.
- Peter and Claire also saw the Brolga at Lake Learmonth, along with a Little Eagle and Swamp Harrier.
- Judith asked if anyone could remember when the last Brolga was sighted, with John G thinking 2006 was the last time he'd seen one.
- Julie showed us a photo of a large moth found dead on a path at the gorge in Woowookarung. ID suggestions included a Ghost Moth, Goat Moth, Wood Moth or Swift Moth.
- Vireya was happy to report that thirty Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flew over her house in Lal Lal half an hour before our meeting, the most she had seen in a flock there.

The meeting continued with presentations from members interpreting the topic - "Not-So-Creepy Crawlies" (see following pages).

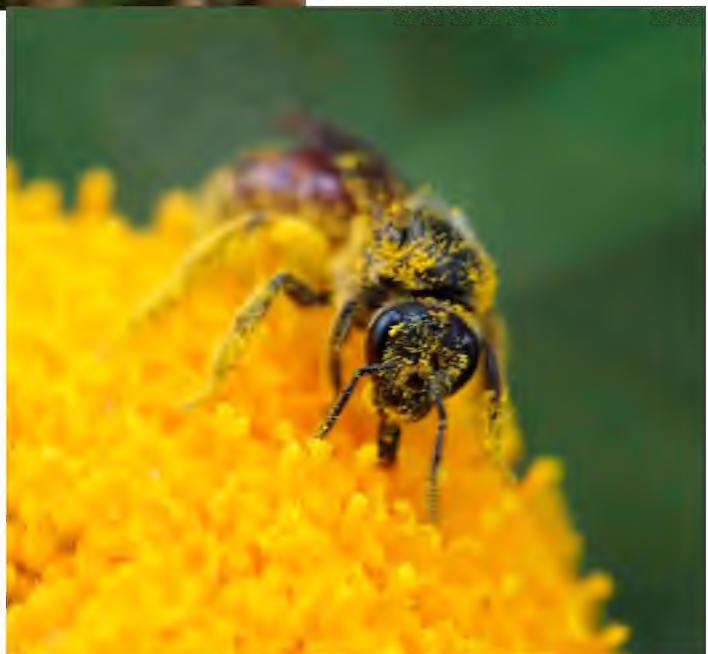
Next Meeting:

Friday April 1st, 2022, 7.30pm on Zoom and guest speaker to be advised.

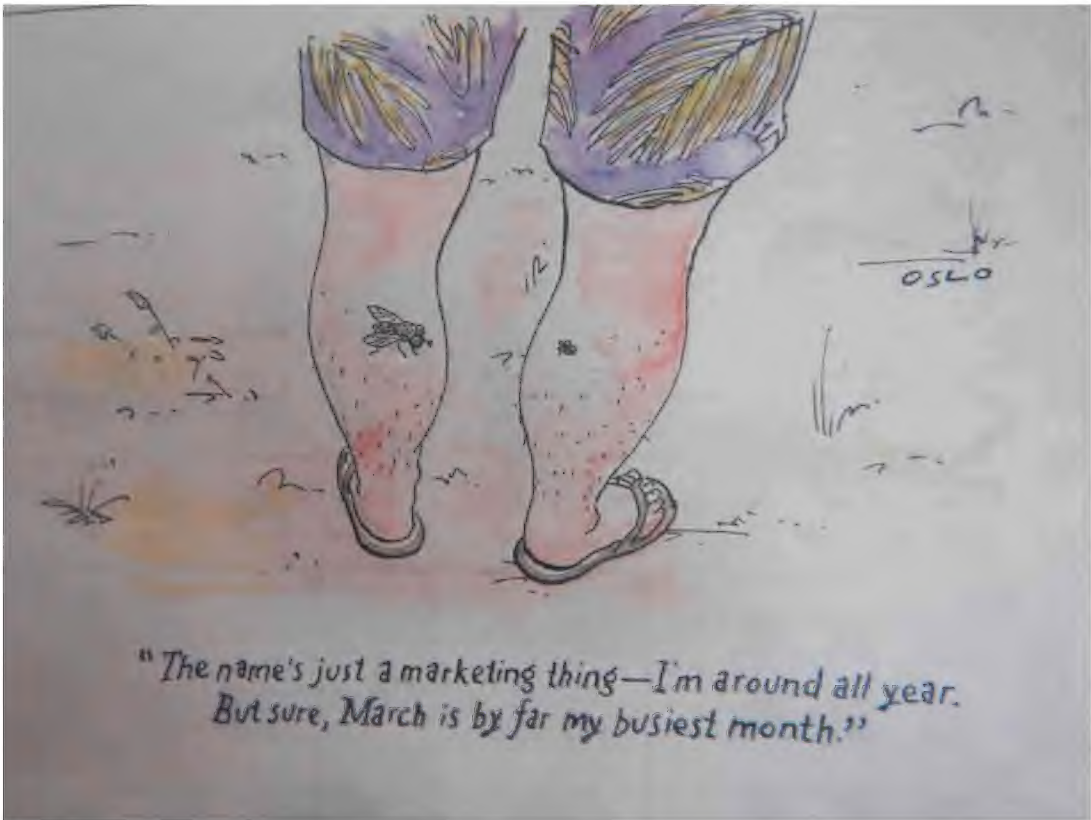
“Member’s Images: Not-so-creepy Crawlies”

Six members (Vireya, Andy, Val, John P, Emily, and Peter D) spoke about colourful images of the critters that they thought fitted this definition, highlighting the beauty, function, adaptations and lives of some incredible insects, spiders, chameleons and other reptiles.

We (Claire and Peter) showed mostly pictures of insects busy enjoying the “spring” bounty of alpine flowers at or near Mt. Hotham in January. We also included a friendly, attractively marked spider next to our drive which made a beautiful web including one of our cars which we then didn’t use for about a week. There was a beautiful, large moth, possibly a wood moth and a large spider on Heather’s glass kettle. Was it thirsty? Up in the high country, especially around a large pond near Dinner Plain we enjoyed watching bees frantically gathering pollen, becoming smothered in yellow, so Peter showed a short video of one thus at work.



Andy’s offerings of the March Fly - not always a welcome sight at this time of year show the beauty of the creature that we may often overlook. Also, a touch of humour goes a long way.



*"The name's just a marketing thing—I'm around all year.
But sure, March is by far my busiest month."*

Val H revisited a trip to Mt Baw Baw - Gippsland in 2019 where she spent a week with the Nature photography group - so had lots of hours to observe “creepy” crawlies.

These included the beautiful green, black and white McClays Swallowtail butterflies feeding on the dark pink trigger plants, the well camouflaged Alpine grasshopper, a burrowing bee which madly digs holes in pathways and a tiger snake which she observed for about 10 min before he decided to depart into the shrubbery.

The last few slides were taken while observing which insects visited a flowering Sedum in her garden on a sunny day- 3 occasions. The bees loved it, but also hover flies, a ladybird, a grasshopper and a Bright Shield skipper butterfly also came.



Vireya explained how the ugly larvae of the otherwise cute ladybirds in her garden (Large Spotted Ladybird *Harmonia conformis*) turn out to be voracious feeders on other insects, particularly aphids.

Not particularly attractive bugs, but great for natural pest control!

Les Hanrahan provided this report on the fungi seen on the Wetlands excursion:

Some fungi have appeared since the recent rain. At Mullawallah Wetland, an Inkcap *Coprinopsis nivea* was spotted by Vireya. The 25mm wide conical cap with black gills was on a 60mm high stem about 4mm wide. A bright yellow capped bolete was seen on the trunk of a fallen pine tree at Haddon Common. The 100mm dry cap, only partially opened, was on a stem 30mm wide and the dull yellow pores could be seen through the gap in the partial veil. On a pine log, the 12mm tall yellow spikes of the Pretty Horn *Calocera sinensis* were seen. Nearby on the same log were the small yellow blobs of *Dacrymyces stillatus*. The bright red Scarlet Bracket *Trametes coccinea* was noticed on a log.

A small rod-shaped Earth Tongue, a *Geoglossum* species, was seen on gravelly quartz soil. The black, wider upper half is the fertile part that is supported by a narrower infertile base. It was about 30mm tall and about 4mm wide on the top half. Three white *Amanita* fruit bodies were on the downstream bank of the Argyle Dam. The 100mm cap was on a white stem that was bulbous at the base, but without a partial veil. The gills were a light fawn colour.



Pretty Horn *Calocera sinensis*
(stock photo)

The enigmatic BEN award

Early in February, Susan Kruss was reading records of FNCB and found that the Club had received an award in 2002 for their contribution to the environment 2000-2002. However, she could not find any details of why FNCB received the award and sent an email to the Club seeking more information.

I had some memory of the reward and in my diary found that the BEN Forum in 2002 was held on Saturday 30 Nov of that year.

Copies of *The Ballarat Naturalist* from 2002 and 2003 published the following information:

BN September 2002: August Meeting Points: Ballarat Environment Award draft nomination was circulated for comment.

BN February 2003: December Meeting Points: John Gregurke reported on the forum attended by 140 people including 7 Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat members. The participants enjoyed an interesting program of speakers and excursions. Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat received the Community Group Environment Award for environmental achievement during 2000-2002 and the club will be acknowledged on the Hall of Fame Honour Board.

BN April 2003: Carol Hall's President's Report for 2002-2003

included this: "The Year was capped off when the Club received the Ballarat Environment Network's Community Award for 2002, an honour bestowed every second year; our book formed a major part of the nomination, and at the BEN Forum in November, John Gregurke and Claire Dalman accepted the award on behalf of the Club."



2002 was the year the Club published *Discovering Ballarat's Bushland* so I think that may be why we received the award.

This week I looked in the Club cupboards at Fed Uni and found the hardwood plaque given to the Club.

I remember going to the dinner at which FNCB received the award. Claire Dalman also attended the dinner.

Gavin Cerini suggests that more information could be found in the BEN records stored in a shed in the Fed Uni yard at Gregory St.

John Gregurke 4 March 2022

A note from the Treasurer...



Thank you to all those members who have already paid their membership for 2022.

In the 3 weeks since the AGM over half our members have paid, which is a great result. We now have 35 financial members, which includes our 6 Life Members.

A reminder to those members still to pay, EFT (electronic funds transfer) is the easiest way to pay via your banks' online banking. If you prefer, you can pay in person at any branch of the Bendigo Bank. Make sure you include your name as the transaction reference.

Our account details:

Name: Field Naturalists Club Ballarat Inc

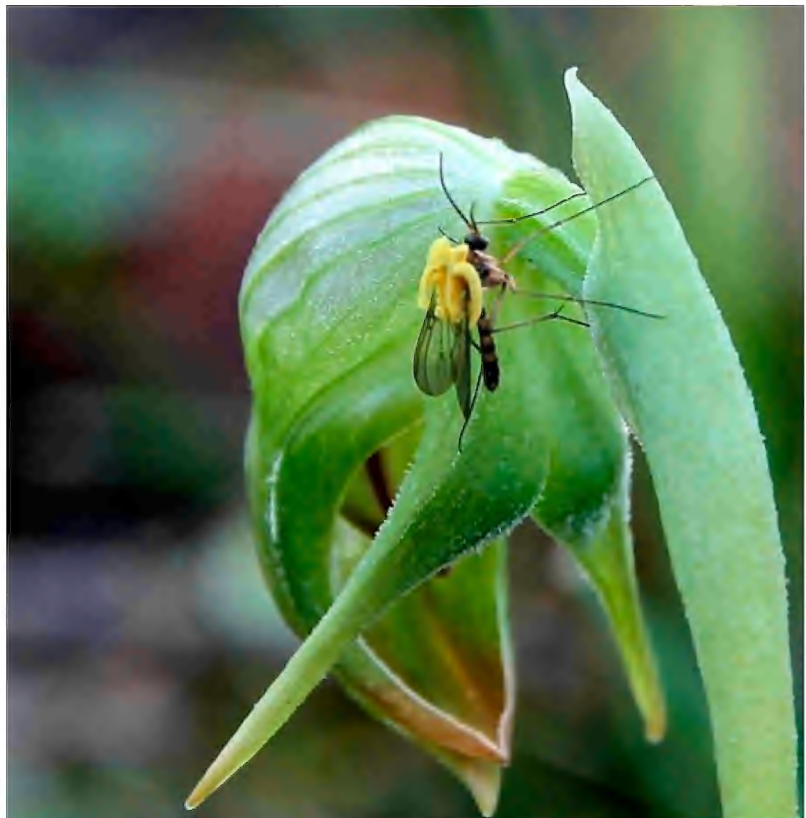
BSB: 633 000

A/c number: 119 112 290

Membership Fees remain at 2021 rates - see page 5)

Kind regards,
Kathy Elder

Emily's contribution to Members' Images was this fantastic pic of a mosquito-like, male Fungus Gnat with Nodding Greenhood pollinia on its back.



"NAT FIELD"
PRESENTS -

FASHIONS IN THE FIELD

SENSIBLE
SHIRT
(LONG SLEEVES)

BINOCULARS

SENSIBLE
LONG PANTS
(WITH OPTIONAL
DETACHABLE
LOWER LEGS)

SENSIBLE BOOTS

HAT
(FLOPPY)

BACK PACK
WITH
SNACKS, WATER,
FIELD GUIDES,
MOBILE
(VOLUME Φ),
JUMPER,
RAINCOAT,
etc



Did you see the Magpie Goose hiding in the
reeds, just behind the Pelican?

Get out your Diary!
(Excursions and Meetings in 2022)

Fri Apr 1st: Club meeting via Zoom. Guest speaker is Greg Kerr from Nature Glenelg Trust. Greg will be telling us about a Climate Adaptation Strategy for Barwon South West.

Sun Apr 3rd: Field trip led by Andy Arnold as he explains the local waterways to the west of Ballarat. Meet at Gillies St. Campus of Fed Uni at 9.30 am, ready to depart at 9:45 am. Finish by 4.00 pm. This will be a driving excursion, visiting multiple sites with minimal walking.

Fri May 6th Club meeting via Zoom. Guest speaker John Walter from Wombat Forest Care.

Sat May 7th Fungi excursion, Details to be advised.

*We continue to abide by current COVID rules and restrictions.
Please note that you must be fully-vaccinated when taking part in face-to-face club activities.
If you are not well or are suffering any flu-like symptoms, please stay at home to minimise the risk to others.*

Committee

President	Margaret Rich
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Kathy Elder
Committee	Andy Arnold Bernadette Cheesman Bill Elder Val Hocking Graeme Lunt John Petheram

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Email: Secretary:- Emily Noble

Editor: Bill Elder

Treasurer Kathy Elder

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

Club email: ballaratfnc@gmail.com

Meetings - may continue to be held via Zoom.

Members will be kept informed of arrangements each month.

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